

Woman's Union Missionary Society.

SAD WEDDINGS.

By OUR MISSIONARIES in Allahabad, India.

FEBRUARY is the month for weddings, and many of our school girls are being married. Those of low caste we expect to return in a few days or weeks, when the ceremonies are over, and they may remain in their fathers' houses for a year or two longer. I was amused the other morning, as I was teaching in a school, when an old woman asked me to let the pupils go home. She said, "Can't you hear those drums? They are beating for their marriage, which is now going on, and they have run away and come to school." I could say no more to detain the children, and the two little dirty-faced and ragged girls got up and went out.

In my Sunday-school two days ago we could scarcely hear ourselves speak, there was such a din outside.

I missed some children too, and on inquiry found that this was wedding music.

A little pupil of mine did not read last week because she was just married, and at her mother-in-law's house. This week she was at home in Allahabad. She had a very pretty new white saree, a silver ornament in the shape of a chain about her waist, and much silver about her ankles. She is a slim, pretty little thing, and looked very sweet. She told me that she expected soon to go away to her husband's house, in Benares, and my heart ached for her. She looked very serious, and I imagine must have had some idea of what was in store for her.

The other day, as I was walking along, I heard a heart-broken sob, and from the cross-lane on my right, came a little procession, formed by some people, following coolies, bearing the little covered arrangement in which women are carried, when necessity compels them to pass through the streets. In this they sit perfectly concealed from any one's gaze. The sobs proceeded from within this, and it was of one who was evidently tired with long crying. The cause was not hard to guess, as I saw a little bride taken from her mother's house. Poor little children !

It does afflict me when I see these *little girls* taken from their mothers to go and live among utter strangers, uncertain of the treatment they may receive, which, no matter how kind it may be, yet can never be like the home love.

I hope influences are at work which will break up this dreadful system of early marriages. Much is being written and spoken on the subject, and it does seem as if the agitation would end in reform. I believe many of the people who lack courage openly to advocate it, yet wish it might be brought about.

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